

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

- 1           1.       A method for notifying a computer user of a computer information  
2 message, comprising the steps of:  
3           receiving an action performed on a computer by a user;  
4           determining if a condition associated with the received action requires  
5 generation of an information message;  
6           selecting an information message to be generated corresponding to said  
7 condition;  
8           locating a target object associated with the action performed by the user, to  
9 which the information contained within the notification message relates; and  
10          displaying a notification object which indicates the target object and  
11 contains said information message corresponding to said condition.  
12  
1           2.       The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object comprises a  
2 warning.  
3  
4           3.       The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object comprises  
5 an error message.  
6  
7           4.       The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object comprises a  
8 notification.  
9  
10          5.       The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object includes a  
11 cartouche which points to the target.  
12  
1           6.       The method of claim 1, wherein said step of displaying includes  
2 providing a video animation sequence.

1                   7.     The method of claim 1, wherein said step of displaying includes  
2 generating an audio indicator.

1                   8.     The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object is  
2 collapsible.

1                   9.     The method of claim 8, wherein said notification object collapses in  
2 response to a user action.

1                   10.    The method of claim 9, wherein said notification object collapses in  
2 response to a mouse event.

1                   11.    The method of claim 10, wherein said notification object contains  
2 an icon, and collapses in response to a mouse click on the icon.

1                   12.    The method of claim 9, wherein said notification object collapses in  
2 response to a keyboard command.

1                   13.    The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object is persistent  
2 and remains displayed until said condition is removed.

1                   14.    The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object is displaced  
2 from said target object so that it does not obscure said target object.

1                   15.    The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object is non-  
2 modal and enables the user to continue interaction with an application program  
3 corresponding to said target while said object is being displayed.

1           16. The method of claim 15, wherein said notification object enables a  
2 user to interact with application programs other than the application program  
3 corresponding to said target, while said object is being displayed.

1           17. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
2           hiding the notification object when an application associated with said  
3 target is inactive; and  
4           displaying the notification object when an application associated with said  
5 target is active.

1           18. A system for notifying a computer user of a computer information  
2 message, comprising:

3           means for receiving an action performed on a computer by a user;

4           means for determining if the received action requires generation of a  
5 computer information message;

6           means for selecting a computer information message to be generated  
7 corresponding to said action performed by the user;

8           means for locating a target object corresponding to the action performed  
9 by the user, to which the information contained within the notification message  
10 relates; and

11           means for displaying a notification object which indicates the target object  
12 and contains said information message corresponding to said target object.

1           19. A graphical user interface element for providing a user with  
2 information regarding a computer application being executed, comprising a  
3 notification object containing information relating to a target within said computer  
4 application and an indication mechanism which forms part of said object and  
5 points to the target with which the computer notification object is associated.

1                   20.    The user interface element of claim 19, wherein said information  
2 comprises text information.

1                   21.    The user interface element of claim 19, further comprising:  
2 an icon disposed within said object relating to said information.

1                   22.    The user interface element of claim 21, wherein said icon comprises  
2 an on-screen button for receiving user interaction.

1                   23.    The user interface element of claim 19, wherein said indication  
2 mechanism comprises a cartouche.

1                   24.    The user interface element of claim 19, further comprising:  
2 an audio indicator for indicating the display of the notification object on a  
3 computer screen to a user.

1                   25.    The user interface element of claim 19, wherein said notification  
2 object is displayed with animation.

1                   26.    A computer program stored in a computer-readable medium which  
2 executes the following steps:

3                   receiving an action performed on a computer by a user;  
4                   determining if the received action requires generation of an information  
5 message;  
6                   selecting an information message to be generated corresponding to said  
7 action performed by the user;  
8                   locating a target object corresponding to the action performed by the user,  
9 to which the information contained within the notification message relates; and

10 displaying a notification object which indicates the target and contains said  
11 information message corresponding to said target object.